

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers December 2, 2004

NETS Feature

NETS Winter Weather Tips

Winter weather driving can be inconvenient, frustrating, and infuriating. But it can also be dangerous. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the leading cause of death during winter storms is traffic crashes. While we can't control the weather, drivers can offset the aggravations and risks associated with winter weather driving. The Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) has compiled winter weather tips to help keep you safe during this winter season. More.....

http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/12_1_04a.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

Safe Smart Women

S2W, a non-profit organization promotes driver safety strategies and car care awareness to young women. S2W offers relevant information and skills training to educate and empower young women to improve their performance behind the wheel, and the reliability and safety of the cars they drive. Nationally, fatal crash rates for young women escalated 42% in a decade, and car crashes are the cause of nearly 48% of all deaths to young women (in contrast to 30% for young men). In addition to a wealth of practical information available at their website, S2W holds free "hands on" skill-building clinics for young women, where they learn the basics of advanced driving, car care maintenance, and how to select a safe and appropriate car. For more information, visit www.s2w.org, or call 410-562-1008.

Adaptive Cruise Control Could Relieve Congestion

Research conducted by a University of Michigan physicist suggests that adaptive cruise control might be the answer to reducing freeway traffic without spending billions of dollars on new and wider roads. Adaptive cruise control allows cars to maintain a certain distance from the vehicle ahead and adjusts its speed when necessary without disrupting the flow of cars traveling behind it. According to the research, cars equipped with adaptive cruise control can reduce the ripple effect that occurs when one or two cars slam on their brakes in heavy traffic causing back-ups and delays. The research also suggests that highways can handle many more vehicles, even if fewer than half are equipped with the technology. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2004/technology/0411/21/C03-11202.htm>

Savvy Consumers Want Functionality, Value Added to Navigation Systems

According to the J.D. Power and Associates, 2004 Navigation Usage and Satisfaction Study, more consumers are familiar with factory-installed navigation systems, placing new demands on automakers to increase their functionality and value. Based on the responses from 9,271 owners who recently purchased or leased vehicles with factory-installed navigation systems, the study found that 36 percent of current navigation system owners have prior experience with navigation systems—a six percent increase in just two years. Survey respondents wanted future navigation systems to have extended points-of-interest information that provides features such as business hours, telephone numbers, and

restaurant menus. Read the press release at

<http://www.jdpower.com/news/releases/pressrelease.asp?ID=2004175>

IIHS: Car Seats, Head Restraints Are Unsafe in Rear-End Collisions

A new study conducted by the IIHS found that few car seats and head restraints offer adequate protection for passengers involved in rear-end collisions. According to IIHS, only eight of 73 seats subjected to crash testing provided good protection against neck injuries such as whiplash. Another 16 were rated "acceptable" and an additional 24 seats failed a more basic test by not providing head restraints high enough to reach the heads of tall passengers. The federal law that addresses head restraints performance has not been updated since 1969 and a proposal to strengthen the requirements has been pending since 2001. Meanwhile, some automakers, including General Motors, have been designing new seating and head restraint systems to prevent such injuries. Read the release at http://www.iihs.org/news_releases/2004/pr111404.htm

New California DMV Chief Proposes Taxing Drivers by the Mile

The new director of the Department of Motor Vehicles in California has issued a controversial proposal to pay for roads. The proposal suggests taxing drivers by the mile, rather than by a fuel tax. In the California Performance Review, the director suggested two possible methods of collecting such a tax. The first would involve placing a GPS device in each vehicle to track how many miles it traveled on California roads. The second would use a device that sends a signal from cars' odometers to gas pumps when fueling, charging the road-use tax amount at the pump. Oregon is in the process of testing the GPS method. Privacy advocates have voiced concerns regarding how the information could be used.

IIHS: Side-Impact Airbags Effective in Preventing Fatal Crashes

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), airbags have saved nearly 14,000 lives since 1987. Recent research conducted by IIHS shows that side impact airbags have played a significant role in preventing fatal crashes. According to IIHS, side airbags with head protection reduce deaths by 45 percent among drivers of cars struck on the driver's side. While every new car and truck today comes equipped with frontal airbags, the federal government does not require manufacturers to sell vehicles with side-impact airbags. However, automakers offer side-impact airbags on many of their vehicles as options. Read the release at http://www.iihs.org/news_releases/2004/pr100304.htm

Many Drivers Unprepared for the Return of Rear-Wheel Drive

Thirty years ago, almost all cars were rear-wheel drive. However, following the oil embargoes during the 1970s, carmakers shifted to front wheel drive to improve fuel economy. Now, as rear wheel drive is making a comeback, many drivers aren't prepared to handle the driving differences. To help drivers, DaimlerChrysler has produced a safety training video on the benefits of rear wheel drive. The video also covers all-speed traction control, electronic stability systems, and independent rear suspensions. For more information visit www.fleet.chrysler.com/rwd_video.jsp

Electronic Stability Control Effective in Reducing Rollover Crashes

Following the release of major studies focusing on the effectiveness of Electronic Stability Control (ESC), General Motors Corporation and Ford Motor Company has announced plans to install the systems on many of their Sports Utility Vehicles (SUV). Safety experts agree that SUVs are most vulnerable to rollovers and would benefit from the technology. According to NHTSA, ESC systems are highly effective in reducing rollover crashes. IIHS reports that ESC was found to have reduced single-vehicle fatal crash involvement risk by 56 percent over the past three years. Read the full article at

http://finance.lycos.com/qc/news/story.aspx?symbols=NYSE:GM&story=200411112250_AP_O_V0207

Hands-Free Technology Raises Safety Concerns

As in-vehicle technology continues to increase, there is growing concern over driver distraction. According to NHTSA, driver distractions—including everything from eating to talking on a cell phone—contribute to approximately 25 to 30 percent of all traffic crashes. And now according to a recent article in “The New York Times,” more automakers, their suppliers, and cell phone manufacturers are pitching hands-free devices to consumers as a safer option. However, federal regulators and safety experts say that hands-free technology may give a false sense of security. The concerns have prompted the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers to establish safety standards for vehicle technology, such as designing DVD players and in-vehicle televisions that cannot be seen by the driver while the vehicle is in motion and recommending that no more than two seconds be required to look at a device to operate it. Read the full article at (be patient when opening this file---there's some advertising before you are linked to the article)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/26/business/26driver.html?ei=5090&en=5e7395536ca67c52&ex=1259125200&adxnnl=1&partner=rssuserland&adxnnlx=1101831384-sZ0u%2BxypxZTZQyKPiPciSw>

News from USDOT

NHTSA Announces US Involvement in Global Safety Standardization

The United States and 20 other nations have agreed to join forces to adopt new international standards that are expected to lead to safer vehicles worldwide, while lowering costs for manufacturers and consumers. Known as “Global Technical Regulations,” future new standards will address and regulate head restraints, motorcycle brakes, lighting devices, window glazing, and pedestrian safety. The first standard—addressing door locks and retention systems to help prevent injury and death due to passenger ejection—was agreed to recently in Geneva at the 134th session of the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations. View the press release at

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hot/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr0011-04.html>

NHTSA Campaign Leads to Increased Belt Use

NHTSA's 2003 “Click It or Ticket” campaign is being credited for substantially increasing seat belt use for the primary group targeted: young adult and adult males. There was also increased usage in urban and suburban areas among females within the same age range. The 2003 campaign was much larger than previous campaigns—law enforcement in 43 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico wrote 500,000 tickets for non-use. The findings were released by the Administration's National Center for Statistics and Analysis. Read the release at

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr46-04.html>

FY 2005 Transportation Funding Set

The 108th Congress approved the omnibus appropriations bill outlining transportation funding for fiscal year 2005 to include \$34.35 billion for highways of which \$1.2 billion is earmarked for special products. Meanwhile, the six year TEA-LU/SAFETEA authorization failed to gain enough support and will officially die in December when Congress adjourns. However, the highway programs will continue to function until May 31st because Congress passed the sixth extension of TEA-21 in September. House



NHTSA: Daytime Running Lights Prevent Certain Daytime Crashes

New findings by NHTSA show that daytime running lamps can significantly reduce certain kinds of daytime crashes. According to the study daytime running lights were responsible for reducing opposite-direction daytime fatal crashes, opposite-direction/angle daytime nonfatal crashes, non-motorist, pedestrian, and cyclist daytime fatalities in single-vehicle crashes, and daytime opposite-direction fatal crashes of a passenger vehicle with a motorcycle. The findings confirm General Motors' (GM) long-standing research that supports the benefits of daytime running lights. GM was the first automaker to make daytime running lights a standard feature among the majority of its passenger vehicles. View the findings at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/Rpts/2004/809760.pdf>

Safety Officials Target Drivers with Medical Problems

Federal safety officials called on states to do a better job identifying and removing from roadways high-risk drivers with medical conditions like epilepsy and dementia that make them dangerous to other motorists. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommended that states adopt laws that guarantee legal immunity for doctors, family members, and others who report dangerous drivers to state motor vehicle officials. Twenty states and the District of Columbia have no such laws and six states require doctors to report drivers with high-risk conditions. Meanwhile, the government has no data on crashes caused by medical conditions, so the extent of the problem is unknown. Read the full article at <http://www.wtop.com/index.php?nid=106&sid=325735>

NHTSA to Propose New Seat Belt Regulations

NHTSA is expected to propose new regulations for safer seat belts that will improve occupant protection in case of a crash, especially in the event of a rollover. While initial research suggested that strengthening vehicle roofs could reduce deaths and injuries during rollover crashes, the agency now says that seat belt limitations is also a contributing factor. NHTSA estimates that about 20 percent of the 10,376 people killed last year in rollover crashes were wearing seat belts.

Work/Life

IIHS: 'Driver's Ed Doesn't Lead to Crash Reduction'

While many parents and some experts believe that driver education programs provide teens with an invaluable opportunity to learn traffic rules and log several hours of practice time behind the wheel, national safety studies and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) have indicated that driver's education programs have not reduced the crash rate of young drivers over the long term. According to these experts, experience gained through many hours of behind the wheel practice with parent supervision and raising the minimum age to get a driver's permit or license will improve young driver safety. Last year, 3,675 young drivers aged 15 to 20 years old were killed in fatal motor vehicle crashes, and an additional 308,000 were injured. Read the full article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A2825-2004Nov21.html>

New Study Confirms Dangers of Teen Drivers and SUVs

In general, young drivers tend to have more crashes than older, more experienced drivers. However, according to a recent study conducted by the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI), of SUV drivers, teens are the most likely to roll over in the event of a crash. The study evaluated SUV crashes and fatalities between 1999 and 2001 and found that of single vehicle crashes, approximately 37 percent of SUVs with drivers younger than 25 rolled over. The average

rollover rate of single vehicle crashes for all drivers is 30 percent. UMTRI is also expected to conduct a multilevel field study examining risky driving behaviors and countermeasures to reduce these behaviors. UMTRI estimates that risky driving behaviors—including following too closely, speeding, not wearing seat belts, and using a cell phone—contribute or cause at least 40 percent of all vehicle crashes. For more information visit <http://www.umtri.umich.edu/>

International Traffic Safety News

Corporate and Social Responsibility: A New Meaning for Fleet Managers

Fleet managers in the UK are finding they need to do more than buy or develop a safe driving policy to avoid legal risks. The development of a “blame culture” has significantly changed and underscored the meaning of the “Corporate and Social Responsibility” (CSR) concept, which began several years ago with the passage of the Health and Safety Work Act of 1974. For many fleet managers, CSR involved the need to manage the fleet safely and responsibly in order to avoid prosecution or civil actions. Now, not only do fleet managers need to be aware of work-related road safety policies, they must be proactive in implementing a comprehensive safety culture, and be able to prove it.

Fleet Managers Feel Work-Related Pressures

The newly-launched Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the UK is focusing on work-related stress after research suggested that half a million people in the UK experience work-related stress at a level they believe is making them ill. Fleet managers in the UK believe their firms are falling well below the HSE’s management standards for handling work-related stress. One survey found that half of fleet managers feel they are overloaded with work, with one in three working 14 hours more than they are paid for. For more information visit <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm>

Australian Transport Safety Bureau Releases 2005, 2006 Action Plan

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau has recently released its action plan for 2005 and 2006 as part of the National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010. The new action plan identifies the main issues expected to influence road trauma levels in the future and outlines priorities for 2005 and 2006. View the plan at http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/pdf/nrsap05_06.pdf

Smoking Ban in Scotland May Include Fleet Drivers

Experts in Scotland are considering whether a law to ban smoking in public places could have implications on the future of smoking in fleets and vans. The Scottish Executive wants legislation to be introduced by Christmas and implemented in bars, restaurants, and other enclosed spaces by the spring of 2006. The decision comes after Ireland became the first country in the world to ban smoking in restaurants and pubs. Additionally, because the legislation refers to public workplaces, the law includes company cars if they are registered in Ireland.

Customer Service Course to Educate Taxi Drivers in South Africa

In an effort to clean up rude and foul-mouthed taxi drivers, a local roads and transport department in South Africa will be sending them to customer-care lessons. The taxi recapitalization project, which began in March and will continue for seven years, is expected to help instill good customer care in the industry, as well as introduce good quality, safe commuter vehicles. The project will also teach and equip taxi owners with the skills needed to run a viable business. Similarly, another campaign is in development to eliminate illegal taxi operators. Read the full article at http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_1621219,00.html

UK Explores Methods to Detect Vehicles on Railway Crossings

A recent railway crash involving a motor vehicle has prompted railway officials in the UK to explore new technology to detect cars on railway crossings. A railway company in the United States is also experimenting with systems that detect objects on railway crossings. One such system buries wire coils beneath crossings and if a car drives and parks on the crossing as the barrier comes down, the wire coils detect it and alert approaching trains. In Japan, tests are being carried out that attaches stereoscopic cameras to crossings. Using computer software, the cameras determine if a vehicle or even a person is on the crossing. A challenge facing these systems is getting a timely warning to the driver or automatically applying the brakes. Read the full article at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/life/thisweek/story/0,,1347638,00.html>

UK Slow in Managing Traffic, Congestion

According to a new report conducted by the UK National Audit Office, every day millions of motorists sit in traffic jams on England's roads because the Highway Agency has been slow in managing the problem. The report suggests that the agency was too concerned with risks and did not try new ideas. Meanwhile, road congestion is costing industry and commerce £3bn a year. Read the full article at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4043803.stm

Highway Signage Is an Art in Canada

According to a recent article in Canada's "The Province," signage placed prior to exits can help reduce last minute lane changes and reduce congestion. The article also points out that although signs must meet certain color, size and placement requirements, to be effective signs must be clear, accurate, and placed where motorists can actually read them. Read the full article at <http://www.canada.com/vancouver/theprovince/news/driving/story.html?id=2b608c2f-d3e3-47c1-a83a-82cdeeffe1e1>

New Digital Speed Cameras Expected to Catch and Shame Violators

The number of London drivers caught speeding is expected to dramatically increase with the introduction of powerful new "stealth" speed cameras. Motorists in London are already monitored by 700 speed and traffic light cameras, but instead of catching drivers at one point with a flash photo, the new digital cameras measure the car's average speed over a set distance making it impossible to slam on the brakes. Additionally, because they don't use film, these new cameras can log thousands of vehicles a day. Violators will not only get fined, but their license plate will be displayed on large roadside screens shaming them to slow down. Read the full article at <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/articles/14950169?source=Evening%20Standard>

Motorcycle Safety Action Plan Unveiled in Europe

The Association des Constructeurs de Europeens de Motocycles (ACEM) has announced its "Plan for Action," an approach to developing an integrated European policy for safer motorcycling. The release of the publication comes as the ACEM formally publishes the Motorcycle Accident In-Depth Study (MAIDS). Both publications are expected to contribute towards the European Commission's initiative to save 25,000 lives. For more information visit <http://www.acembike.org/html/pages%20secondaires/news6.htm> or read the plan at http://www.acembike.org/html/docs/ACEM%20publications/plan_for_action.pdf

RAC Warns Fleet Drivers of Dangers Caused by De-icing Tactics

A new survey in the UK found that fleet drivers rely on bizarre objects, such as credit cards, CDs, and penknives, to clear their windshields of ice and snow. Yet according to the Royal Automobile Club (RAC), these de-icing tactics can create tiny scratches on windshields that can prove hazardous, and

ultimately lead to expensive window replacements. RAC executives say that the scratches could potentially obscure a driver's vision when hit by sun glare or glare from oncoming traffic.

Private Car Users Overlooked by Fleet Management

According to the National Car Rental and Fleet News 2004 Duty of Care Survey, more than half of employers in the UK with staff who drive their own vehicles for work never check to see if the cars are fit for work purposes and are leaving themselves vulnerable to prosecution. A total of 64 percent of drivers said their employers never carried out checks on their vehicles, but 77 percent said they have checked it themselves.

Journal Article Analyzes On-The-Job Crash Variables

A recent article in "Ergonomics" analyzed the relationships between organizational and individual variables to on-the-job crashes and crash-free kilometers. The research focused on the factors and driver behaviors of on-the-job crashes using a western Canadian corporation as a model. The sample drivers allowed the recording of their on-the job crashes and crash-free kilometers. The research provides insight into the role of organizational support, planning, environment adaptations, fatigue, speed, and errors.

Source: Ergonomics 2004 Author: Caird, J. Kline